

VOYAGE

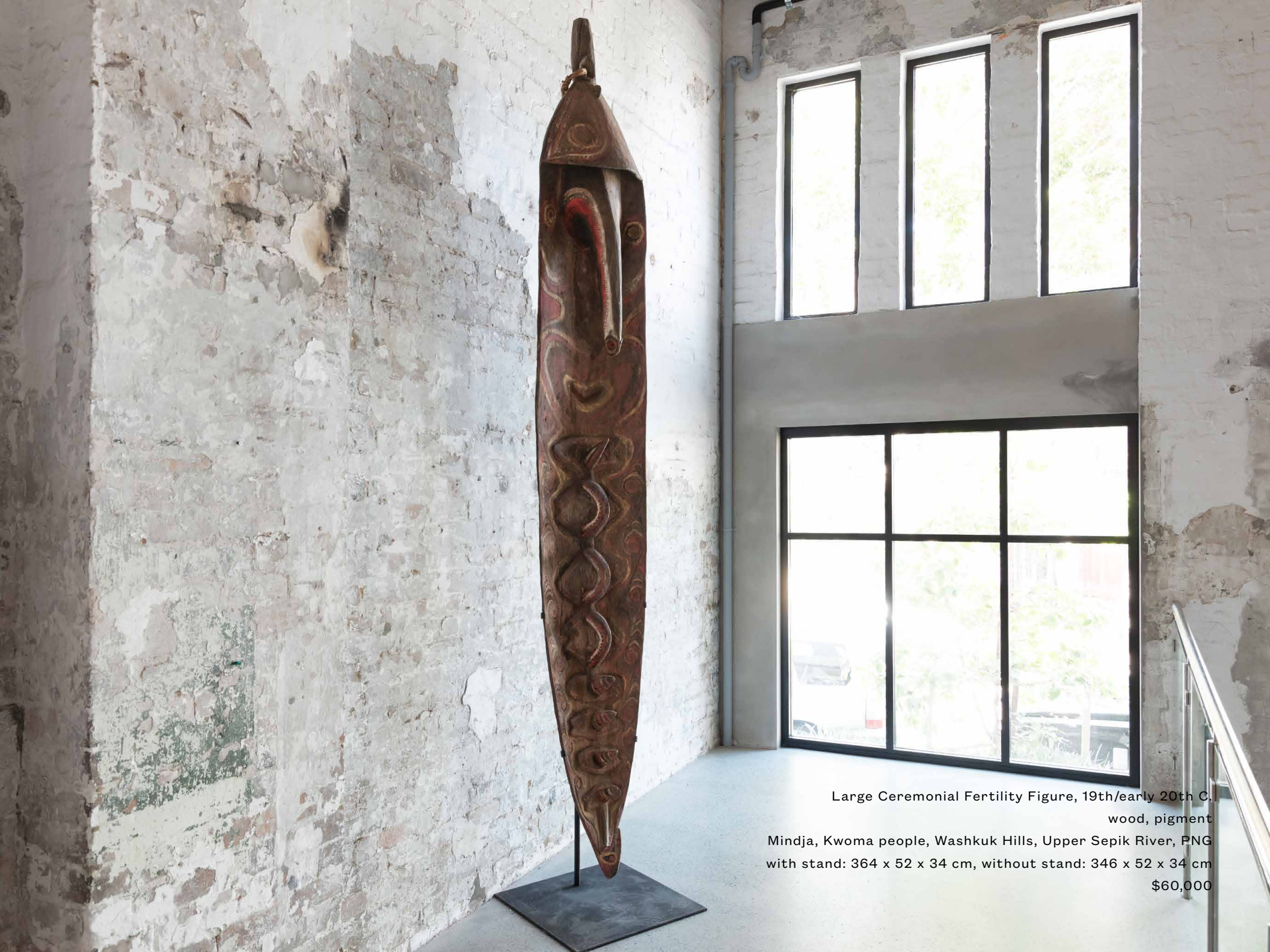




Oceanic Art is seductive; it has that connection with the spirits and ritual that the modern world has lost; yet it is the root of all our contemporary art.

Oceanic, more so than the other tribal arts, is full of colour and eccentricity; there are over 800 language groups just in Papua New Guinea, signifying 800 different cultures that each interpret and create artworks in such diverse ways.

Voyage investigates and reimagines these traditions, bringing the art of Oceania into the present day and highlighting its continued relevance and importance.



Large Ceremonial Fertility Figure, 19th/early 20th C.

wood, pigment

Mindja, Kwoma people, Washkuk Hills, Upper Sepik River, PNG

with stand: 364 x 52 x 34 cm, without stand: 346 x 52 x 34 cm

\$60,000



This Mindja figure is one of the largest and most important ever to be brought out of the Washkuk Hills.

Douglas Newton collected several large Minjas in the early 1970s that are now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, but are inferior to this impressive example. It was collected by Keith Buxton about 1969 who lived in Ambunti at the time. It was sent by boat to Madang and in 1973 exported to Cairns, Australia by Barry Hoare. Mindja,

according to Newton (1971:87) represent water spirits; but also related to the sky.

They are the central figure in the Mindja ceremony, the second ceremony in the yam harvest cycle. "Crocodile and Cassowary" by Douglas Newton, The Museum of Primitive Art, NY 1971.



Spirit House Post, Mid-20th C.

wood

Latmul people, Middle Sepik River, PNG

270 x 31 x 44 cm

\$14,000



Large House Post from the Haus Tambaran
(Men's Spirit House) at Angoram.
It was built in the early 1960s, and survived
into the mid-1970s.

The Spirit House was taken down and
rebuilt, with some surviving posts stored
away under a house in a nearby village.
These were acquired in the 1990s and
brought to Australia.
This impressive post with a large spirit face
was carved by artists from Tambanum
village.

Below the faces are water/wind motifs that
depict water as the wind blows across
it – a wind called the Talio that blows in
June and July, which blows life into all
living things.

If this wind ceased, Big Men say,
all life would cease.



Spirit House Post, Mid-20th C.

wood

Latmul people, Middle Sepik River, PNG

258 x 35 x 52 cm

\$12,000



Spirit House Post, (detail)



Ancestor Spirit Figure, Mid-20th C.
wood, pigment
Nngwalndu, Sunuhu, Ilahita, fringe Abelam, East Sepik Province, PNG
with stand: 220 x 36 x 22 cm, without stand: 204 x 36 x 22 cm
\$6,000



The Ilahita culture, heavily influenced by Abelam, lies just to the west of the main Abelam population.

The faces of their figures can be moon-like (like this figure) with the head seemingly floating on the body. This gives these figures a rather other-worldliness.

Like Abelam sculpture, this figure is one of form, lacking great detail, but brought to life with bold colours – always red, black and white; sometimes yellow.

Ancestor Spirit Figure, (detail)



Ancestor Spirit Figure, Mid-20th C.
wood, pigment
NngwalIndu, Bongiora village Abelam, East Sepik Province, PNG.
with stand: 227 x 42 x 10 cm, without stand: 210 x 42 x 10 cm
\$7,000

These large Abelam figures are used inside the Men's Spirit House (Haus Tambaran) during the initiation ceremonies of young males.

They are not carved or painted on the back, as they are positioned along the sides, and seen only frontally. Abelam sculpture has a strong form, with little detailed carving.

They are painted in bright colours (red, white, black and yellow), where the detail is revealed. This figure was collected in the early 1970s at Bongiora village, soon after a Haus Tambaran opening and initiation, by Dr Fred Gerrites. He worked as the local doctor in Maprik and collected many pieces that he sent home to Dutch museums, in particular Leiden. Later when he moved to Australia he also donated to the Queensland Museum.

This was in his private collection, til shortly before his death in 2018.



Ancestor Spirit Figure, (detail)

Large rings made from the small nassa shells are wealth objects, used primarily for Bride Price Payments, and at the funeral gatherings of important men and women.

Nassa shells are the traditional currency of the Tolai people, still used even today. The nassa shells are collected both locally but also from as far away as being traded in from the Solomon Islands.

In pre-contact times part of warfare and raiding parties was to confiscate the enemy's shell wealth. A small strand of these nassa shells can be used in daily transactions, to buy a pig, a canoe etc. When a man becomes wealthy, thousands of shells, threaded onto cane are wound together into large circles called "Loloi". Usually they are bound with pandanus or banana leaves to preserve their whiteness, and stored away. It becomes like a shell bank. "Loloi" are important for Bride Price Payment – when the dowry is paid for a new wife. They are rarely sold or traded, and few are found outside Papua New Guinea, and their traditional use within Tolai society.

They are of great value and highly prized.





Giant Nassa Shell Ring, Loloi, mid/late 20th C.

nassa shells, fine cane, fishing line

Tolai people, East New Britain, PNG

with stand: 90 x 72 x 10 cm - without stand: 72 x 72 x 10 cm

\$6,000



John Wahgi

Phantom Shield, Late 20th C.

wood, enamel paint

Wahgi Valley, Jiwaka Province, PNG.

135 x 44 x 15 cm

\$5,800

From North American Western culture, to Melanesia, the 'Phantom' image first began to appear on New Guinea Highland shields in the 1980s as pop culture articles began to filter in from soldiers and occupying personnel. Phantom painted shields were a spontaneous development by the young warriors who were the first generation to be able to read the left behind comics. With Independence, and less autocratic rule, warfare emerged once more; old shields were reused and new ones made. For the modern day warrior it was the Phantom's protection of village people (albeit set in Africa) and above all his immortality (The Man Who Never Dies) that served as inspiration. Today, Phantom Shields of Papua New Guinea remain as rare artefacts marking the peculiar effects of cross-cultural influences.

Phantom Shield, (detail)





Contemporary Shield, Late 20th C.
wood, enamel paint
Jiwaka Province, PNG.
157 x 62 x 13 cm
\$8,000



The artist who painted this shield (unknown) mixed many messages. The central figure has an emblem on his chest "Superman", yet the figure itself, with flowing hair and cape is very Christ-like. Written at the base of the shield is again "Superman", and the name of two clans, "Konumbka" and "Nenaka", long time enemies who were engaged in fighting in 1986. Ex-collection Ray Hughes, Sydney.

Contemporary Shield, (detail)

Slit Gong, garamut, 19th/early 20th C.

wood

Angriman village, Middle Sepik River, PNG

167 x 51 x 34 cm

\$35,000



This garamut is stone carved, almost certainly dating back to the 19th C. as it has been in the family for 5 generations. When the owner moved from Angriman village to live in Angoram after WW2, he brought this heirloom garamut, carved by his grandfather, with him. The drum is modest in size and exquisitely carved. A crocodile ancestral face forms the drum finial, and a delicately carved bird is perched on his brow. The drum has an overall beautiful patina and dark honey-colour.



Slit Gong, garamut, (detail)

These stone bowls were not made in recent times; their making and use ceased long before the arrival of the white man in the 1930s. When dug up in garden beds, or digging post holes, they become objects of magic; and also objects of fertility in certain male and female cults. Pig blood is an important offering to the spirits, and the red pigments suggest this. The stones are “eggs” of the spirits. The pestle found with one chalice-shaped mortar, suggests prehistoric use may have been food preparation.





Stone bowl, Prehistoric
14 x 21 x 21 cm
\$1,800



Stone bowl, Prehistoric
18 x 16 x 16 cm
\$1,000



Stone bowl, Prehistoric
13 x 12 x 12 cm
\$800



Skull Rack Figure, mid 20th C.
wood, pigment
Brugnaui, Upper Sepik River, PNG.
with stand: 200 x 26 x 15 cm, without stand: 189 x 26 x 15 cm
\$5,000



The latmul of the Middle Sepik are renowned for their head-hunting practices and the many rituals and ceremonies that evolve from this central cultural practice. Enemy heads were mounted in various ways in the Haus Tambaran (Men's House), to draw on their power. Important clan leaders skulls were also dug up after their death, and honored. This figure would be such, now with a replica wooden head. This carving dates back to the 1950/1960s, and is of great merit and elegance.

Skull Rack Figure, (detail)



Fighting Shield, (detail)

Oval in shape with a bold central circle.

This is a fighting shield made of a semi-hard wood called warrumbi.

Designs are always bold –

here a bright red circle surrounded by a white line,

on a black shield – and

somehow meant to

“terrify the enemy”.

The red circle is sometimes described as the “sun”

(a Creator Being), but also

sometimes described as a

“navel”, suggesting an underlying anthropomorphic meaning.

Collected in Nipa Valley in 1990s, where tribal warfare continued well into the 21st century

Fighting Shield, (detail)



Fighting Shield, mid 20th C.
wood, pigment, fibre sling
Warrumbi, Nipa Valley, Southern Highlands, PNG
130 x 44 x 2 cm
\$4,000



Fighting Shield, mid 20th C.
wood, pigment, fibre sling
Warrumbi, Nipa Valley, Southern Highlands, PNG
126 x 48 x 2 cm
\$3,800

Oval in shape with a bold central circle. This is a fighting shield made of a semi-hard wood called warrumbi.

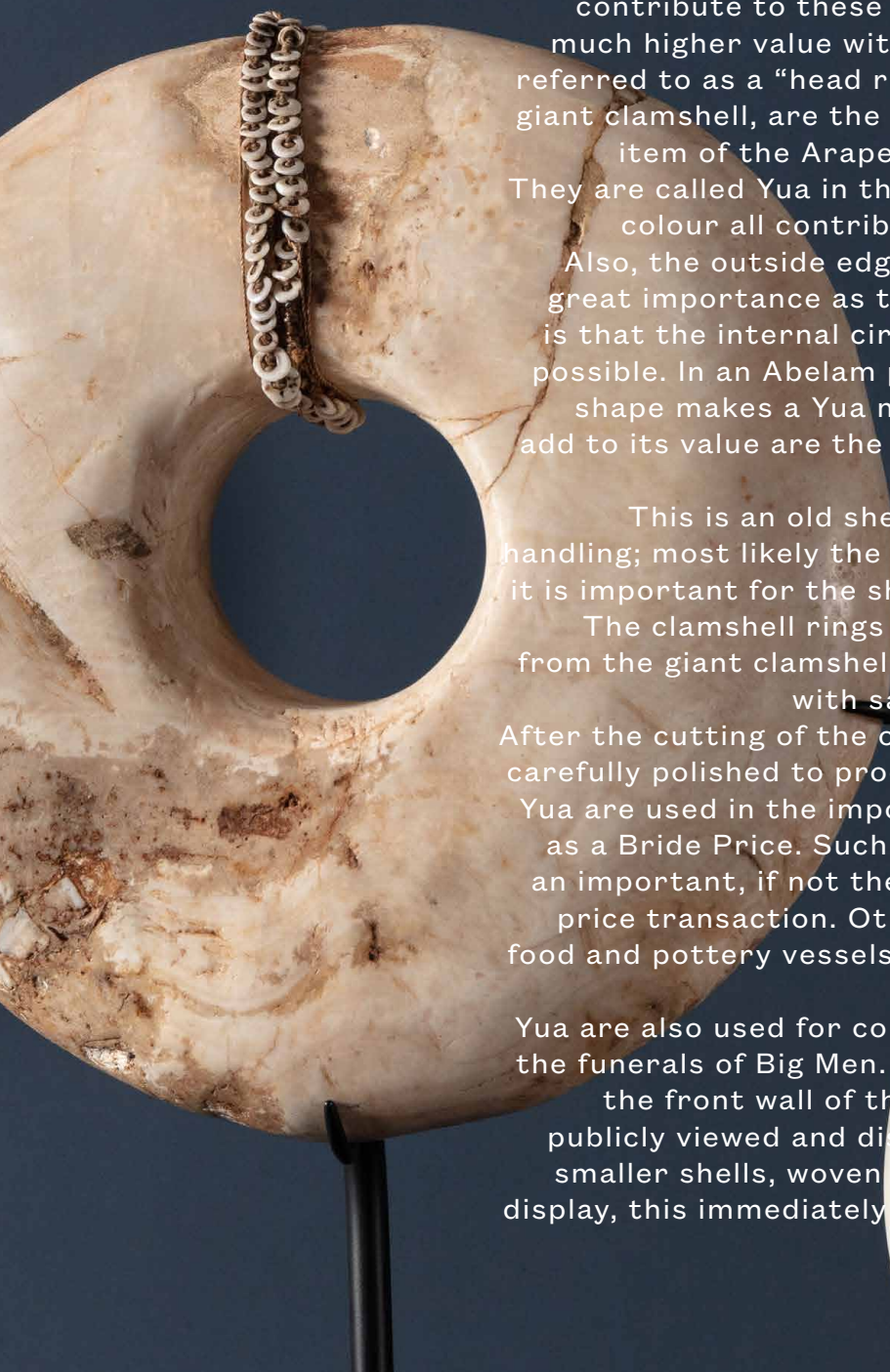
Designs are always bold – red central circle on a white shield. The red circle is sometimes described as the “sun” (a Creator Being), but also sometimes described as a “navel”, suggesting an underlying anthropomorphic meaning.

White is the colour of mourning in the New Guinea Highlands, and when a warrior dies in battle, often white is added to the clan’s shields.

Collected in Nipa Valley in 1990s, where tribal warfare continued well into the 21st century.



Fighting Shield, (detail)



This “Yua” is extraordinary due to its great thickness; as well it has a beautiful creamy colour. These factors all contribute to these particular rings being considered of much higher value within the culture, and would always be referred to as a “head ring”. Large Shell Rings, cut from the giant clamshell, are the most important and valuable wealth item of the Arapesh and neighbouring Abelam people. They are called Yua in the local language. Size, thickness and colour all contribute to the value of these shell rings. Also, the outside edge is more or less circular, but not of great importance as to its exact shape; what is important is that the internal circle be as close to a perfect circle as possible. In an Abelam person’s eye, a near perfect circular shape makes a Yua more valuable. Other attributes that add to its value are the warm creamy colour, and fine bands of shell growth rings.

This is an old shell, with a smooth finish from ages of handling; most likely the surface would have been cleaned, as it is important for the shells to “glow” when being displayed.

The clamshell rings were traditionally cut by specialists from the giant clamshell, using only bamboo (in combination with sand). It was a long and arduous task. After the cutting of the outer and inner circles, the shell was carefully polished to produce a pleasing and smooth surface. Yua are used in the important transactions of life, primarily as a Bride Price. Such a large and well-made ring would be an important, if not the most important element of a bride price transaction. Other lesser shell wealth objects, pigs, food and pottery vessels are also part of the payment of the groom’s family to that of the bride. Yua are also used for compensation payments and traded at the funerals of Big Men. At such times they are displayed on the front wall of the large Spirit House where they are publicly viewed and distributed. This is one reason for the smaller shells, woven onto a band; Among all the shells on display, this immediately personalizes the shell for its owner.



Giant Clamshell Ring, 19th/early 20th C.

clamshell, nassa shells, fibre

Papesh Boiken, Prince Alexander Mountains, PNG.

with stand: 31 x 22 x 3 cm - without stand: 23 x 22 x 3 cm

\$1,600



Giant Clamshell Ring, 19th/early 20th C.

clamshell, nassa shells, fibre

Papesh Boiken, Prince Alexander Mountains, PNG.

with stand: 34 x 23 x 3 cm - without stand: 24 x 23 x 3 cm

\$1,800



Giant Clamshell Ring, 19th/early 20th C.

clamshell, nassa shells, fibre

Papesh Boiken, Prince Alexander Mountains, PNG.

with stand: 38 x 25 x 8 cm - without stand: 27 x 25 x 8 cm

\$2,000

Yipwon Spirit Figure, mid 20th C.
wood, pigment
Korewari/Blackwater Rivers, Sepik River Region, PNG.
with stand: 189 x 12 x 10 cm, without stand: 173 x 12 x 10 cm
\$2,800



Yipwon Spirit Figure, mid 20th C.
wood
Korewari River, Sepik River Region, PNG.
with stand: 220 x 18 x 6 cm, without stand: 214 x 18 x 6 cm
\$3,800

These twisted, more 3-dimensional forms are found in the more easterly region of the Blackwater River, a tributary that joins with the Korewari and Korosomeri Rivers, before all flow northwards into the Sepik River.



Yipwon Spirit Figure, (detail)

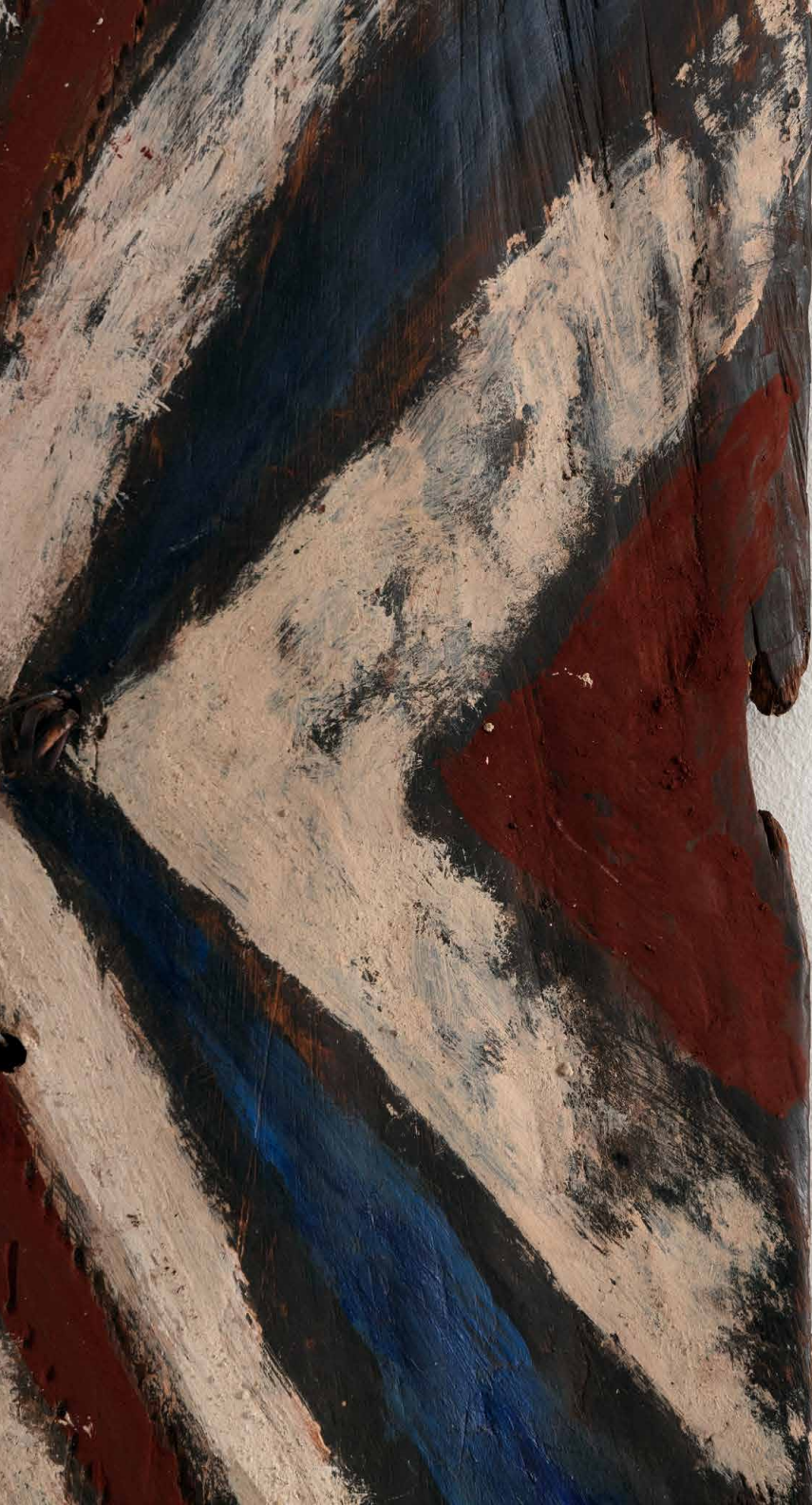
The Yipwon of the Korewai River area represent cult spirits, associated primarily with hunting, both for pigs and other animals, and headhunting in warfare. They tend to be two-dimensional, with a head, one leg, and opposing hooks that meet centrally around a body organ. This figure is classic – tall and elegant. Many such figures would be kept in the Men's House, addressed before hunts or headhunting raids, to bring success. These yipwon, in mythology were created from the chips of wood sent flying during the making of the first garamut (slit gong), taking on these hooked forms and given a life-force.



Yipwon Spirit Figure, (detail)



Fighting Shield, mid 20th C.
wood, pigment, fibre
Wahgi Valley, Western Highlands, PNG.
162 x 58 x 10 cm
\$3,000



This is a shield, made of traditional repei wood, that can be read on many levels. Its painted design is absolutely traditional, with a triangular border at the top, and a strong motif below of “X’s” or “crosses”. Traditionally these can be read as an abstract ancestral figure; but it also closely resembles the British Union Jack, that would have been very much in evidence to New Guinea warriors as it forms the top corner of the Australian flag – their colonial rulers.

Fighting Shield, (detail)

Spirit House Lintel, mid 20th C.

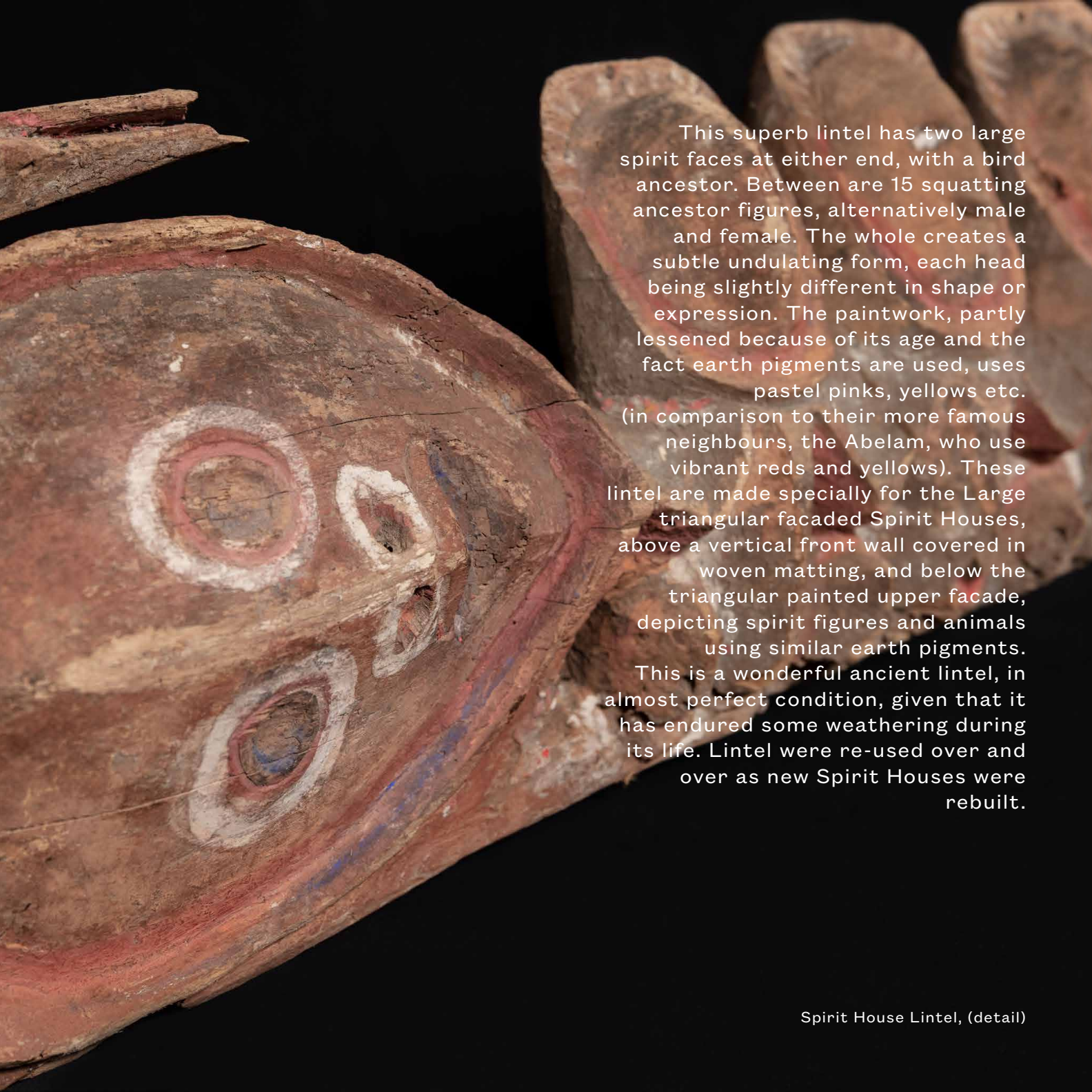
wood, pigment

Yangoru, Prince Alexander Mountains, East Sepik, PNG.

278 x 25 x 8 cm

\$8,000





This superb lintel has two large spirit faces at either end, with a bird ancestor. Between are 15 squatting ancestor figures, alternatively male and female. The whole creates a subtle undulating form, each head being slightly different in shape or expression. The paintwork, partly lessened because of its age and the fact earth pigments are used, uses pastel pinks, yellows etc. (in comparison to their more famous neighbours, the Abelam, who use vibrant reds and yellows). These lintel are made specially for the Large triangular facaded Spirit Houses, above a vertical front wall covered in woven matting, and below the triangular painted upper facade, depicting spirit figures and animals using similar earth pigments. This is a wonderful ancient lintel, in almost perfect condition, given that it has endured some weathering during its life. Lintel were re-used over and over as new Spirit Houses were rebuilt.



Ancestor Figure, Early/mid-20th C.
wood, pigment
Numangwa village, Sawos region, Middle Sepik River, PNG.
225 x 28 x 24 cm
\$10,000



This life-sized wooden figure reflects the abstract like rendition that Sawos artists use.

The body is slim and decorated on the chest and arms with ceremonial adornments; however it is the face that dominates this sculpture, as do the two imposing curvilinear birds that surmount the head.

This figure once adorned the interior of a Sawos Haus Tambaran; Sawos Spirit House posts are rarely carved (unlike their latmul neighbours), and this figure, hollowed at the back was strapped to a central post.

Ancestor Figure, (detail)



Ehara Dance Mask, Mid-20th C.

Cotton trade cloth, pigment

Elema, Papuan Gulf, PNG.

with stand: 169 x 67 x 38cm, without stand: 77 x 67 x 38cm

\$4,000



This well-made Elharo mask is not made using tapa, but cotton cloth. The mask is beautifully made, dating to 1950s or 1960s, but the artist has decided to use a cotton trade cloth. This is typical in New Guinea, that artists will experiment with new materials that are considered aesthetically equivalent to the traditional. The white form, with sparse details picked out in black and orange, give this mask an other-worldliness, that convey the feeling of the ancestral spirits.

Elharo Dance Mask, (detail)

All four stone adze blades have a pure shape that is ideal for their function – cutting wood in particular but also shaping wood and other materials. But beyond the functionality they have great aesthetic appeal. Indeed the finest were kept as wealth objects, to be traded with other clans.



Stone Adze Blade, Prehistoric

Papua New Guinea

with stand: 23 x 10 x 2 cm - without stand: 19 x 10 x 2 cm

\$600



Stone Adze Blade, Prehistoric

Lake Sentani region, West Papua

with stand: 29 x 10 x 3 cm - without stand: 23 x 10 x 3 cm

\$800



Stone Adze Blade, Prehistoric
Witu Islands, West New Britain
with stand: 20.5 x 6 x 2.5 cm - without stand: 16.5 x 10 x 2cm
\$300



Stone Adze Blade, Prehistoric
Wahgi Valley, New Guinea Highlands
with stand: 37 x 8 x 4 cm - without stand: 31 x 8 x 4 cm
\$600



Spirit House Lintel, mid 20th C.

wood, pigment

Yangoru, Prince Alexander Mountains, East Sepik, PNG.

278 x 25 x 8 cm

\$8,000





Lintel, with four large spirit heads.
The Spirit Houses of Maprik region
are tall triangular facaded
buildings, with a large triangular
painting on the top half, woven
matting below, and separating the
two are the carved lintels.
This lintel is old; it may have
been used on a small Spirit House,
but more likely, it is part of what
was originally a much longer lintel.
Collected in Kombikum
Village in 1970's.

Spirit House Lintel, (detail)



Gable Mask, Mid-20th C.

Coconut cloth, cane, fibre, pigment

Blackwater River, middle Sepik River, PNG.

91 x 66 x 42 cm

\$3,000

Large Spirit Houses dominate almost every village in the Middle Sepik region, and also those groups in close proximity. These houses have soaring gables at each end, and within the triangular façade created by the roof, gable masks are hung at both ends. These Spirit Houses dominate a village, much like a medieval church; these large gable masks represent powerful ancestor spirits who watch over the village, and also make sure village customs are obeyed.



Gable Mask, (detail)



Tapa Cloth

Samoa

275 x 495 cm

\$900



Large Tapa Cloth, Samoa.
These are made from the bark of the mulberry tree, and painted with natural dyes made from leaves and roots. They are used for large community gatherings, weddings, funerals etc. when they are unfolded onto the grassy areas for sitting.

Tapa Cloth,
Coconut cloth, cane, fibre, pigment
275 x 495 cm
\$900

Tapa cloth, (detail)

Model Canoe, mid 20th C.
wood, white pigment, fibre
Wuvulu (Matty) Island, PNG.
226 x 56 x 70 cm
\$5,000

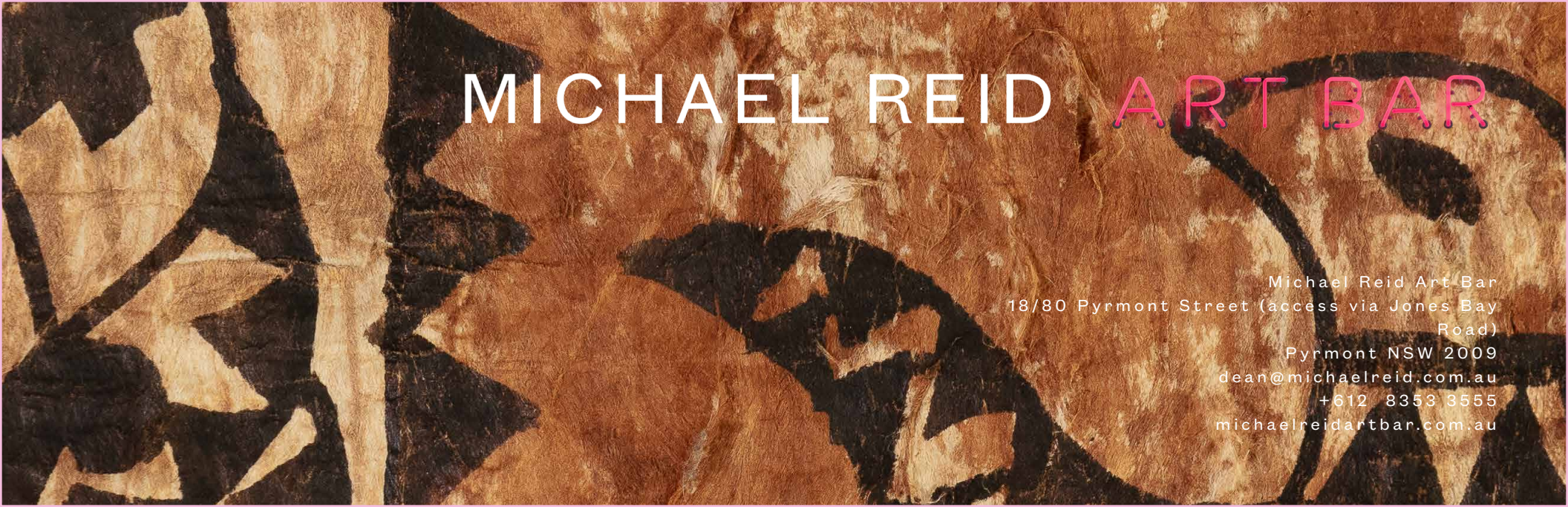




Model canoes are part of traditional crafts to teach canoe building and show the skill of the carver.

They have been collected since 19th C. in the Pacific and can be found in many museum collections.

This canoe is from Wuvulu (Matty) Island, one of a group of small islands north of the New Guinea mainland. This slender canoe form, with outrigger, pointed at both ends, and surmounted by two elegant spires, is certainly one of the most spectacular coastal canoes of Oceania. This example is a large model, superbly made, with outrigger and the two spires removable ex-PNG coll, ex-Australian coll. Mid-20th C.



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